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Request for the inclusion of a supplementary item in the agenda of the sixty-sixth session

Observer status for the Central European Initiative in the General Assembly

Letter dated 13 July 2011 from the Permanent Representatives of Italy, Montenegro, Serbia and Ukraine to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Pursuant to rule 14 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, we have the honour to request the inclusion of an item entitled "Observer status for the Central European Initiative in the General Assembly" in the provisional agenda of the sixty-sixth session.

In accordance with rule 20 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, an explanatory memorandum in support of the above-mentioned request (annex I) and the relevant draft resolution (annex II) are attached.

We have the honour to request that the present letter and its annexes be circulated as a document of the General Assembly.

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Annex I

Explanatory memorandum

Historical background

The origin of the Central European Initiative lies in the creation of the *Quadrangolare* or *Quadrilateral* in Budapest on 11 November 1989, the founding fathers of which were Austria, Hungary, Italy and the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. On that occasion, the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the four founding members adopted a joint declaration stating the readiness of their Governments to strengthen good-neighbourly relations and to develop manifold cooperation among their respective countries. In 1990, Czechoslovakia was admitted and the Initiative was renamed *Pentagonale*; in 1991, with the admission of Poland, it became *Hexagonale*. A number of new member States were admitted in 1992, at which time it was decided to rename the organization the Central European Initiative. The expansion of the Initiative continued in 1993, 1996 and from 2000 to 2006 with the admission of its last, eighteenth, member State. The Central European Initiative is now the largest intergovernmental forum for regional cooperation.

Membership

The Initiative is an intergovernmental forum for regional cooperation and consultation among its 18 member States, which are located in Central, Eastern and South-Eastern Europe.[1] It is guided by the Central European Initiative Guidelines and Rules of Procedure, a document which summarizes the Initiative's objectives, structure and operating principles. The member States of the Initiative are also guided by the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, all the documents of the "Helsinki Process" of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the final declarations and documents of the meetings of the Heads of Government and the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the Initiative.

Structure

The Initiative operates in a flexible manner to promote intergovernmental, inter-parliamentary and business cooperation. The "Intergovernmental Dimension", which provides political and economic orientation and is responsible for the organizational and financial directives of the Initiative, consists of the following bodies: Meeting of the Heads of Government (Summit); Meeting of the Ministers for Foreign Affairs; Committee of National Coordinators; working bodies (focal point networks, project implementation groups and ad hoc task forces); and the Executive Secretariat.[2] The Parliaments of the States members of the Initiative have

[1] Albania, Austria, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Italy, Montenegro, Poland, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Ukraine.

[2] The Executive Secretariat was established in Trieste, Italy, under the Austrian presidency in 1996, following an offer by the Government of Italy to host its headquarters in Trieste free of charge and obligations, under terms described in a protocol concluded between the Executive Secretariat and the autonomous region of Friuli Venezia Giulia. It operates with the legal status of an international organization, based on a headquarters agreement concluded in 1996 between the Italian Government and the Austrian presidency of the Initiative. A revised headquarters agreement was signed with the Romanian presidency in 2009.

been cooperating since the early years. The "Parliamentary Section" and the "Business Section" have their own structure and rules of procedure.

Chairmanship

The chairmanship (presidency) rotates at the beginning of each calendar year based on the alphabetical order of the English names of the member States. The Chairman-in-Office is supported by the former Chairman and the upcoming Chairman, forming the "Troika" of the Initiative.

Flag and language

The Initiative's flag has a blue background with the official logo in the middle. The logo consists of the block letters "CEI" with a block transcription "CENTRAL EUROPEAN INITIATIVE", surrounded by a semicircle composed of 10 yellow stars. The working language is English and all documents are produced in English.

Mission statement

The mission statement of the Initiative is "Regional cooperation for European integration".

Goals and objectives

The strategic goals of the Initiative are to work for a cohesive and united Europe, without dividing lines, a Europe with shared values that embraces all the countries, regions, peoples and citizens of the continent; and to focus on cooperation within the framework of the Initiative, in particular on assistance to strengthen the capacities of the least advanced member countries and of those having the greatest need for accelerated economic development or recovery.

Cooperation within the framework of the Initiative is aimed at achieving the following principal objectives: strengthening cooperation among member States, and in particular on the European agenda, as an added value without prejudice to further European Union enlargement; supporting all interested member States in their endeavours to move towards further European integration; strengthening its cooperation with the European Union by taking part in and facilitating the implementation of applicable European Union programmes; and promoting the development of civil society, which is known to be a catalyst in democratic transformation processes.

Areas of cooperation

Intergovernmental cooperation within the framework of the Initiative includes, inter alia, the following areas: consultations on political matters of mutual interest; economic and technical cooperation; the development of transport, energy, telecommunications and agriculture infrastructure; the strengthening of democratic institutions and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to national minorities, as well as humanitarian matters; protection of the human environment; cooperation in the fields of science and technology, media, culture, education, youth exchange and tourism; and cross-border and interregional cooperation. The triennial plan of action defines the organization's priorities within the established areas of cooperation.

Funds and instruments

In order to achieve its goals and objectives, the Initiative has developed over the years a strong project-oriented component with the aim of complementing the political dialogue among its member States. The projects cover various areas in the economic, institutional and human development sectors and are supported through several funds and instruments, including the Central European Initiative Cooperation Fund, funded by all member States, for small-scale multilateral projects, usually taking the form of conferences, seminars, workshops, etc.; the Central European Initiative Trust Fund at the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, funded by Italy, for technical assistance projects supporting the Bank's investments in member countries that do not belong to the European Union; the Central European Initiative Know-How Exchange Programme, funded by Austria and Italy, for projects related to capacity-building and the transfer of good practices to non-European Union Initiative countries; the Central European Initiative University Network, funded by Italy, for joint programmes such as PhD and Master's courses, summer schools and seminars; the Central European Initiative Science and Technology Network,[3] funded by Italy, which supports scientific and technological cooperation and offers young scientists, preferably from non-European Union Initiative countries, the opportunity to participate in PhD courses, training programmes and research activities at the Network's centres; and European Union Projects, co-financed by the European Commission and other partners, enhancing the involvement of Initiative countries in European Union projects that focus on transnational and regional cooperation.

Cooperation with other organizations

The Initiative endeavours to cooperate with all major international organizations and institutions. It cooperates with the United Nations system and other relevant international organizations, in particular the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), as well as with international financial institutions, especially the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development. It also cooperates with the European Union, the Council of Europe, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and other regional cooperation initiatives on areas of mutual interest.

Relation with the United Nations

The Initiative cooperates with a number of United Nations specialized entities, namely the Economic Commission for Europe in the area of enterprise development, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) in the area of science and technology.

[3] The Central European Initiative Science and Technology Network operates through seven renowned international research centres based in Trieste, Italy: the International Centre for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology, the International Centre for Science and High Technology of the United Nations Industrial Development Organization, the Abdus Salam International Centre for Theoretical Physics, the International School for Advanced Studies, the Synchrotron Light Laboratory ELETTRA, the AREA Science Park Consortium and the Cluster in Biomedicine.

1. Economic Commission for Europe. The Initiative's cooperation with the Economic Commission for Europe, which dates back to 1998 when a memorandum of understanding was signed, should be underlined in particular. This cooperation, especially in the field of small- and medium-sized enterprises, resulted in the publication of "Through the Looking Glass 2000-2001: A Handbook for Investors in CEI Regions", which was presented for the first time on the occasion of the Summit Economic Forum in 2000. The Commission and the Initiative continued this cooperation during the following two years, when "Investiguide 2001-2002: Project Opportunities and Contacts for the CEI Region" and "Investiguide 2002-2003" were published. From 1999 to 2003, annual meetings on cooperation between the two bodies were held in Geneva, back to back with a meeting of the Committee of National Coordinators, with the aim of analysing areas of common support and identifying common projects and activities. In the following years, the Initiative was able to better focus its areas of activity, also with respect to its cooperation with the various international and regional organizations. Recent efforts have been made to relaunch cooperation with the Commission within the framework of the existing memorandum of understanding.

2. UNEP. Cooperation between the Initiative and UNEP is structured by means of a memorandum of understanding between the Initiative and the UNEP Vienna Office/Interim Secretariat of the Carpathian Convention, signed in Kiev on 13 December 2006, on the occasion of the First Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Carpathian Convention. The Initiative and UNEP Vienna had been cooperating on the European Union-funded Carpathian Project, aimed at enhancing the protection and sustainable development of the exceptional natural and cultural heritage of the Carpathian region. In accordance with the memorandum of understanding, special attention is paid to such issues of mutual concern as environmental protection, infrastructure, agriculture and tourism. The Initiative actively participates in events and meetings organized within the framework of the Carpathian Convention, and especially the Conferences of the Parties. At the project level, the Initiative supports seminars and workshops organized in cooperation with UNEP.

3. UNWTO. UNWTO is a key partner in the promotion of international cooperation on tourism, tourism being an important sector for the economic development of the countries in the Initiative region. UNWTO representatives participate in the Initiative's high-level meetings and ministerial meetings on tourism. At the same time, the Initiative takes part in the UNWTO Commission for Europe meetings. The Initiative and UNWTO jointly support numerous projects, meetings and events in the countries of Central, Eastern and South-Eastern Europe, and UNWTO experts often provide their expertise at the Initiative's seminars and conferences.

4. FAO. The Initiative also enjoys fruitful cooperation with FAO, primarily at the project level. The Initiative's main counterpart at FAO is the Technical Cooperation Department and its Investment Centre division. Through its trust fund at the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, the Initiative has financed several technical cooperation projects carried out by FAO experts in Central and Eastern Europe. The most successful projects included support for the development of fresh produce wholesale terminals and the establishment of the Initiative's Wholesale Markets Foundation and the EastAgri Network, a platform of financial institutions investing in agribusiness and agriculture in the Initiative region and

beyond. Ongoing collaboration includes smaller-scale projects aimed at transferring specific know-how in the area of agriculture from European Union to non-European Union States members of the Initiative.

5. UNESCO. In 2009, a memorandum of understanding was signed with the UNESCO Office in Venice, Italy. It represents a framework for promoting joint cooperation and coordination in the cultural and scientific fields, with a view to increasing the impact and effectiveness of the respective programmes and instruments. Areas of common interest include, inter alia, cultural heritage conservation, intercultural dialogue, climate change and sustainable energy, earth sciences and related technologies. Cooperation takes the form of expertise exchange, co-sponsorship, co-organization and co-financing. In the coming period, concrete activities for joint implementation will be identified on the basis of an exchange of proposals between the two organizations.

6. UNIDO. The Initiative cooperates with UNIDO within the framework of the Initiative's Science and Technology Network through the International Centre for Science and High Technology of UNIDO, located in Trieste, Italy. Cooperation with this centre aims at strengthening scientific and technological cooperation in the Initiative region, through the provision of financial support for the organization of seminars, conferences, workshops and training courses. The area of cooperation with the International Centre is defined in a three-year protocol complemented by an annual work programme. The latest protocol was signed at the beginning of 2010.

Activities with Governments and governmental organizations

As an intergovernmental organization, the Initiative actively cooperates with the Governments of its 18 member States, through its bodies, namely the Summit and the Meeting of the Ministers for Foreign Affairs. Other ministerial meetings are also convened based on the needs of special political arrangements on a given issue. The Initiative also strives to cooperate with the most important European organizations and institutions, such as the European Union, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, OECD, the Council of Europe and OSCE.

1. European Union. As regards cooperation with the European Union, cooperation with the European Commission has always been considered important. At the institutional level, the Commission often participates in the Initiative's high-level meetings as a special guest. With regard to operational ties, the Executive Secretariat of the Initiative, through its unit for European Union-funded projects, has succeeded in obtaining support from European Union funds for more than a dozen joint projects, covering various areas (for example, spatial development, information and communications technology and the information society, transport, the development of small- and medium-sized enterprises, energy, etc.). An important development was that, in 2008, the Initiative obtained the role of lead partner in a number of these projects.

2. European Bank for Reconstruction and Development. The Initiative maintains an office at the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development which is responsible for the management of the Initiative Trust Fund and is entirely funded by the Italian Government. It is located within the Operational Policies department of the Bank. Through this office, the Initiative has managed to build a special comparative advantage vis-à-vis other funds active within the Bank. This

cooperation also grants the Initiative higher visibility and allows it to develop better coordination and successful partnerships.

3. OECD. Cooperation with OECD dates back to 2002. Both OECD and the Initiative have benefited throughout the years from their mutual cooperation in terms of the increased impact and effectiveness of their respective programmes and the faster attainment of their common objectives, specifically in the areas of the development of small- and medium-sized enterprises, cross-border cooperation and local development. The results of this cooperation have been presented at several political and economic Initiative Summit meetings.

4. Council of Europe and OSCE. In the area of institution-building and human resource development (culture, education, minorities, combating organized crime, cross-border cooperation, etc.), the Initiative has found strong partners with expert knowledge in a number of specialized organizations such as the Council of Europe and OSCE. Its cooperation with the Council has been strengthened even further in the last few years. The possibility of initiating project-oriented cooperation that could enhance the respective assets and efforts, especially in relation to certain geographical areas and sectors of activity of common interest, has been thoroughly examined. An exchange of information on relevant programmes and activities has resulted in several concrete cooperation proposals.

In addition to these organizations, the Initiative also works in close cooperation with several regional organizations and forums operating within and beyond the Initiative region: the Adriatic Ionian Initiative, the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation, the Council of the Baltic Sea States, the Regional Cooperation Council and the South-East European Cooperation Process.

1. Regional Cooperation Council. Cooperation with the Regional Cooperation Council dates back to 2008, when it was established. The initial contacts were undertaken on the occasion of a coordination meeting organized by the Council on 31 March 2008. Throughout the years, coordination meetings have provided an excellent opportunity for establishing contacts at the bilateral and trilateral levels. Cooperation with the Council was further strengthened through a memorandum of understanding signed on 12 May 2009 in Sarajevo. The highlight of this cooperation is the Sustainable Energy Development Regional Initiative, a first joint project between the Initiative and the Council. The Sustainable Energy Development Regional Initiative represents a concrete coordination effort by the two organizations to launch joint actions in the area of sustainable energy development by combining their complementary approaches in order to maximize the benefits for the countries of Central and Eastern Europe.

2. Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation. Cooperation with the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation dates back to 1997. This cooperation was enhanced when a memorandum of understanding was signed in Istanbul, Turkey, on 7 March 2011. The initial steps towards the memorandum were taken during a number of ad hoc consultations between these two oldest and most experienced regional forums. A number of areas of collaboration were identified, including the environment, energy, transport, agriculture and science and technology. The memorandum is expected to provide a general framework for the coordination of the activities of the two organizations on a regular basis and for strengthening their relations, with the aim of enhancing cooperation and synergizing

efforts regarding issues of common interest. It is also a guarantee that duplication will be avoided.

3. Adriatic Ionian Initiative. To date, cooperation with the Adriatic Ionian Initiative has mainly focused on education in the context of the Central European Initiative's University Network and UniAdrion (a university network within the framework of the Adriatic Ionian Initiative). Nevertheless, a number of initiatives and activities in other areas have been undertaken by the two organizations, including mutual participation in high-level and expert meetings.

Reasons for seeking observer status for the Central European Initiative

The reasons for seeking observer status for the Central European Initiative are as follows:

(a) The Central European Initiative is the oldest and largest forum for regional cooperation in Europe, with a territory of approximately 2.4 million km^2 and a population of over 250 million. It was initially established to give a clear sign that the blocs that had existed in Europe for so long were being overcome through, inter alia, the re-establishment of cooperation links in a subregional context among countries of different political orientation. Throughout its existence, the Initiative has worked hard to establish cohesion and solidarity among its member States. In fact, it has undergone a transformation from being predominantly oriented towards policy dialogue to emphasizing the transfer of know-how and technology and promoting climate and energy sustainability and civil society, especially in the fields of scientific research, education, culture and media;

(b) The building of symbolic and actual bridges across the former (or still existing) dividing lines of Europe can benefit the "underprivileged countries" only if it is accompanied by jobs creation, the strengthening of social and economic systems, and an increased focus on the perspective of young people. In this context, the Initiative is seeking out and closely cooperating with all global, European and regional actors. The final aim is to achieve a concrete positive impact on the lives of the people;

(c) The Initiative tries to do its part by using the structures developed in its almost 22 years of existence, its position within the Governments of the 18 member States and its own funds to develop and co-finance concrete projects in its member countries. This range of opportunities is an important advantage which, if combined with the experience and resources of other international organizations, can have an even stronger impact;

(d) A number of the Initiative's priorities are in line with the Millennium Development Goals, in particular those linked to universal education, gender equality, environmental sustainability and global partnership. The Initiative's activities in these fields include the following:

(i) Universal education. The Initiative's cooperation in the field of human resources development and education is focused on activities aimed at promoting employability through education and training; on the concept of lifelong learning and its implementation; and on education through further development of its University Network. These issues are of particular importance today. In this context, the Initiative contributes by identifying means and methods of integrating specific "sensitive" groups (children,

women, low-qualified people, high school graduates, long-term unemployed people, immigrants, the disabled, etc.) into the labour market through education and training. The development of successful approaches (methods, programmes, initiatives and projects) to enhance the education of children and adults through the exchange of experiences and good practices are among the Initiative's priorities;

(ii) Gender equality. The Initiative supports the promotion of women in all areas of society. It has always aimed to better understand women entrepreneurship in its member countries by analysing the importance of social innovation as part of the entrepreneurial process and to propose concrete recommendations to support socially innovative programmes and policies for women entrepreneurs. It has supported a number of programmes and projects to that end;

(iii) Ensure environmental sustainability. The Initiative is in tune with such major global issues as climate change, environmental protection, increased energy efficiency and renewable energy sources. In this context, all actors ought to find win-win solutions. The Initiative also recognizes the importance of both energy and environmental protection as an essential element for sustainable development. It enhances cooperation in these fields among its member countries, thus contributing to global energy efficiency and environmental sustainability. It does this by providing a framework for consultations and the sharing of knowledge about strategies and policies among its member States and for the implementation of activities and projects;

(iv) Global partnership. The successful implementation of the Initiative's goals and objectives depends to a large degree on the partnership it has established with the United Nations and all other international organizations and international financial institutions, as well as with the Governments, other institutions and civil society organizations of its member States. This partnership continues to be further developed and strengthened. The Initiative and its partners will continue to help to deliver development programmes and projects to those who have the greatest need for accelerated economic development or recovery, which is one of the Initiative's strategic goals.

Through its various funds and instruments of cooperation, the Initiative has financed and supported projects on a number of other issues that are in line with the Millennium Development Goals, such as combating poverty, and improving child and maternal health.

Conclusions

On the occasion of the Meeting of the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the Initiative, held in Trieste, Italy, on 10 June 2011, the Ministers expressed their support for requesting observer status for the Initiative in the General Assembly, thus further strengthening cooperation between the United Nations and the Initiative.

The Initiative intends to maintain its current momentum and to intensify its communication and collaborative action with the United Nations on issues of common interest.

Annex II

Draft resolution

Observer Status for the Central European Initiative in the General Assembly

The General Assembly,

Considering the goals and objectives of the Central European Initiative and its mechanisms of cooperation aimed at promoting cohesion and solidarity among countries,

Wishing to promote cooperation between the United Nations and the Central European Initiative,

1. *Decides* to invite the Central European Initiative to participate in the sessions and the work of the General Assembly in the capacity of observer;

2. *Requests* the Secretary-General to take the necessary action to implement the present resolution.